

Land at School Lane Itchen Abbas Hampshire



Archaeological Watching Brief Report



November 2006

Client: Banner Homes

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NGR: SU 538 330

Land at School Lane Itchen Abbas, Hampshire

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

CONTENTS

Summary	1
1 Introduction	1
1.1 Scope of work.....	1
1.2 Location, geology and topography	1
1.3 Archaeological and historical background	1
2 Project Aims and Methodology	2
2.1 Aims	2
2.2 Methodology	3
3 Results	3
3.1 Description of deposits	3
3.2 Finds	4
3.3 Palaeo-environmental remains	4
4 Discussion and Conclusions	4
Appendix 1 Archaeological Context Inventory.....	5
Appendix 2 Bibliography and References.....	5
Appendix 3 Summary of Site Details.....	5

LIST OF FIGURES

- Fig. 1 Site location
 Fig. 2 Site plan
 Fig. 3 Sections

SUMMARY

Between September and November 2006 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief on Land at School Lane, Itchen Abbas, Hampshire (NGR SU 538 330). The work was commissioned by Banner Homes in advance of the demolition of 2 existing houses and the construction of 10 new dwellings. The watching brief revealed post-medieval terracing along both the western and eastern edges of the site but no significant earlier archaeology. No evidence for the late Roman/early Saxon cemetery located to the south-east, extending into the site, was observed.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

1.1.1 Between September and November 2006 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Land at School Lane, Itchen Abbas, Hampshire (NGR: SU 538 330). The work was commissioned by Banner Homes in respect of a planning application for the demolition of 2 existing buildings and the construction of 10 new dwellings (Planning Application No. F/2005/6080).

1.1.2 Discussions between OA and Tracey Mathews, the Local Planning Authority Archaeological Advisor identified the need to maintain an Archaeological Watching Brief during the course of the groundworks and OA produced a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) detailing how it would meet this requirement (OA, 2006).

1.2 Location, geology and topography

1.2.1 The village of Itchen Abbas is located approximately 5.3 km north-west of the city of Winchester (Fig. 1). The site is situated on the north-western edge of the village at c.60 m above OD, and lies on a south facing raised spur of free draining upper Cretaceous Chalk, which is the main underlying geology of the surrounding downland landscape. The topography falls away to the south for approximately 100 m, off the shallow valley side down to the flood plain of the River Itchen. The development area was used previously for domestic dwellings, now demolished.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 The archaeological background to the watching brief was prepared for the WSI for the project (OA, 2006) and is reproduced below.

1.3.2 The potential for discovering archaeological remains dating to the Palaeolithic and Mesolithic period is low. The position of the site, close to the river, on a spur of chalk downlands, which is likely to have been wooded during this period, suggests that any archaeology discovered is likely to represent chance finds associated with hunter/gather activities.

- 1.3.3 There is an uncertain, but possibly moderate potential for the discovery of archaeological remains dating to the Neolithic through to the Iron Age on the site. Evidence from the Neolithic includes a general scatter of flints having been recovered from various locations within the study area. More importantly a Neolithic penannular ditch and a pit were discovered and excavated in 1994, c 85m from the proposed development site. The same excavations uncovered the remains of a possible Bronze Age structure. Although no *in situ* Iron Age remains have been discovered from within the direct study area, cropmarks including those of field systems attributed to the Iron Age, are present approximately 1km to the north west of the proposed development site. It is possible that this chalk spur with naturally occurring attractive settlement amenities, closely located on the River Itchen, saw scattered occupation throughout this extended period.
- 1.3.4 There is a higher potential for the discovery of archaeology dating to the Roman/early Saxon period. This is particularly so as the site borders the known late Roman/early Saxon cemetery, which lies to its east (McCulloch 1999). The western extent of the cemetery has not been located and it is possible that it could extend into the proposed development site. However, archaeological investigation work carried out so far on the cemetery may indicate that the extent is not that large, with the greatest density of graves being uncovered c 50 m to the southeast. Investigations nearest to the proposed development site (c 20 m to the east on figure 2) revealed no features or graves associated with this cemetery. This evidence suggests that the western boundary of the cemetery may be situated outside the proposed development area, to the east. No evidence of a settlement associated with this cemetery has yet been found and may be located anywhere in this vicinity.
- 1.3.5 A watching brief was carried out by OA during the excavation of a series of soakaway test pits on the site in July 2005 (OA, 2006). The stratigraphy observed during this work consisted of natural chalk overlaid by a prehistoric colluvium. This was sealed by a subsoil which produced a single shard of medieval pottery and was in turn sealed by a modern garden soil. No significant archaeological features or deposits were observed. A north-south trench containing a high pressure oil pipe line has been excavated across the centre of the site, although no details of any archaeological investigation associated with this were available. The development plan leaves a 5 m wide corridor undisturbed above this service.

2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 To identify and record the presence or absence, extent, condition, quality and date of archaeological remains in the areas affected by the development.
- 2.1.2 To preserve by record any such archaeological features or deposits that may be disturbed or destroyed during the course of any intrusive groundworks.

- 2.1.3 To establish whether the known late Roman/early Saxon cemetery to the south-east of the site extends into the development area.
- 2.1.4 To make available the results of the archaeological investigation.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The watching brief was conducted as a series of site visits during works likely to disturb potential archaeological deposits. These works included topsoil stripping, ground reduction, foundation trenching and the excavation of service trenches.
- 2.2.2 A site plan showing the extent and location of these works was maintained at a scale of 1:100 (Fig. 2) and any sections recorded were drawn at a scale of 1:20. All excavations and recorded sections were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. A general photographic record of the work was also made. Recording followed procedures detailed in the *OA Field Manual* (ed. D Wilkinson, 1992).

3 RESULTS

3.1 Description of deposits

- 3.1.1 The underlying natural, a blocky chalk containing small to medium sized flint nodules (6) was exposed between 1.0 m and 2.2 m below the original ground surface (Fig. 3, Sections 1, 2, 3 and 4). This layer could be seen to be in excess of 1.2 m deep within the foundation excavations. Overlying this was a layer of pale brown silt clay, with chalk flecking (5). This layer measured between 0.2 m deep (Section 1) and 0.9 m deep (Section 2) and represents a layer of colluvium, probably prehistoric in origin.
- 3.1.2 This was sealed by a layer of light brown clay silt (4), a subsoil, possibly a layer of earlier worked soil measuring between 0.2 m and 0.3 m deep. Within the north-east corner of the site this had been overlaid by a layer of modern mixed dark grey silts and redeposited chalk (8), up to 1.2 m in depth, forming a terrace retained by a concrete block wall (Fig. 3, Section 3). Elsewhere on the site layer 4 was overlaid by a layer of dark brown silt loam (3) measuring between 0.3 m and 0.4 m deep. This represents a buried soil horizon, probably the original ground surface prior to the original development. Along the centre of the eastern edge of the site this layer was overlaid by a lens of mixed grey-brown clay silt, ash and chalk flecking (7), measuring 0.5 m deep at its thickest point tapering away towards the edges (Fig. 3, Section 2) and approximately 10 m wide. This deposit contained numerous fragments of glass and stoneware bottles and jars, earthenware and transfer printed pottery, bone and tins suggesting a large deposit of domestic refuse dating to the late 19th or early 20th centuries. This was sealed by a layer of dark grey-brown clay silt and chalk rubble (2) of between 0.25 m and 0.5 m in depth. This layer had been landscaped forming terraces along the eastern and western edges of the site. Its composition suggests that it was the material cast up during the excavation of the foundations and septic tanks for the now demolished houses on the site, Abbotsbury and the Paddocks,

used to terrace the site. Overlying this was a layer of dark brown silt loam (1), between 0.25 m and 0.35 m deep, a layer of post-medieval garden soil relating to the now demolished buildings.

3.2 Finds

3.2.1 All the finds recovered were of a late 19th century/early 20th century date. Artefacts recovered included glass and stoneware bottles and jars, earthenware and transfer printed pottery, butchered animal bone, tins and 2 examples of discarded enameled saucepans. These finds probably represent deposits of domestic refuse from previous dwellings on the site (All the finds were recorded, but only a representative sample were retained). No earlier dating evidence, residual or *in situ*, was recovered during the course of this watching brief.

3.3 Palaeo-environmental remains

3.3.1 No deposits suitable for environmental sampling were identified during the watching brief.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

4.1.1 The watching brief showed that there were no significant archaeological features or deposits present within the development area. There is a possibility that later cultivation may have destroyed any such evidence, however the lack of residual finds, or of truncated deeper features would mitigate against this. No evidence for the late Roman/early Saxon cemetery located to the south-east continuing within the development area was encountered during the course of the watching brief.

4.1.2 The layer of subsoil (4) may represent a layer of earlier worked soil, the presence of a fragment of medieval pottery recorded during an earlier watching brief would suggest this, however no further evidence was encountered during this phase of watching brief.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i>Date</i>
1	Layer	0.2 m - 0.25 m	Garden topsoil over the site	C20th
2	Layer	0.25 m - 0.5 m	Made ground, garden terracing	C19th/C20th
3	Layer	0.3 m - 0.4 m	Buried soil horizon	Possibly medieval ?
4	Layer	0.2 m - 0.3 m	Subsoil	-
5	Layer	0.2 m - 0.9 m	Colluvium	-
6	Layer	> 1.2 m	Natural chalk with flint nodules	-
7	Lens	0.18 m - 0.5 m	Spread of domestic refuse	C19th/C20th
8	Layer	0.5 m - 1.2 m	Made ground forming garden terrace	C20th

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

McCulloch, P 1999 *The Late Roman and Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Itchen Abbas, Hampshire, March 1999*

OA, 2006 *Land at School Lane, Itchen Abbas, Hampshire: Written Scheme of Investigation*

OA, 2006 *Land at School Lane, Itchen Abbas, Hampshire: Archaeological Watching Brief Report (On Ground Investigation Pits)*

OAU, 1992 *Fieldwork Manual* (ed. D Wilkinson, first edition, August 1992)

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Land at School Lane, Itchen Abbas, Hampshire

Site code: WINCM:AY 291

Grid reference: NGR SU 538 330

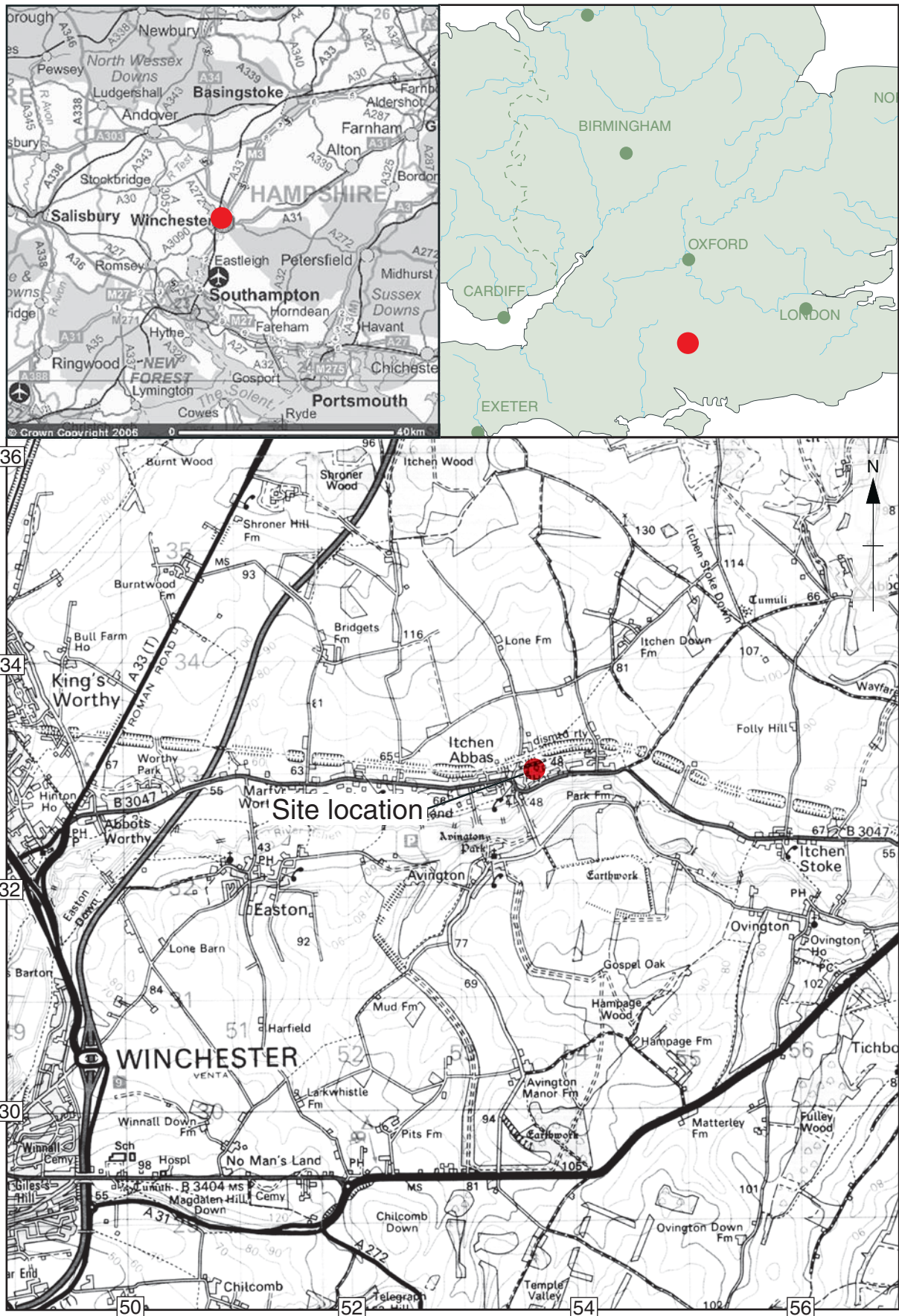
Type of watching brief: Machine excavation of foundation and service trenches, ground reduction and topsoil stripping

Date and duration of project: Five site visits, from 29/9/06 to 16/11/2006.

Area of site: 45 m x 70 m

Summary of results: The watching brief revealed post-medieval terracing along the eastern and western edges of the site sealing the original topsoil overlying colluvium and natural chalk, no significant archaeology was observed.

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Hampshire County Museums Service in due course, under the following accession number: WINCM:AY 291



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Figure 1: Site location



Figure 2: Site plan

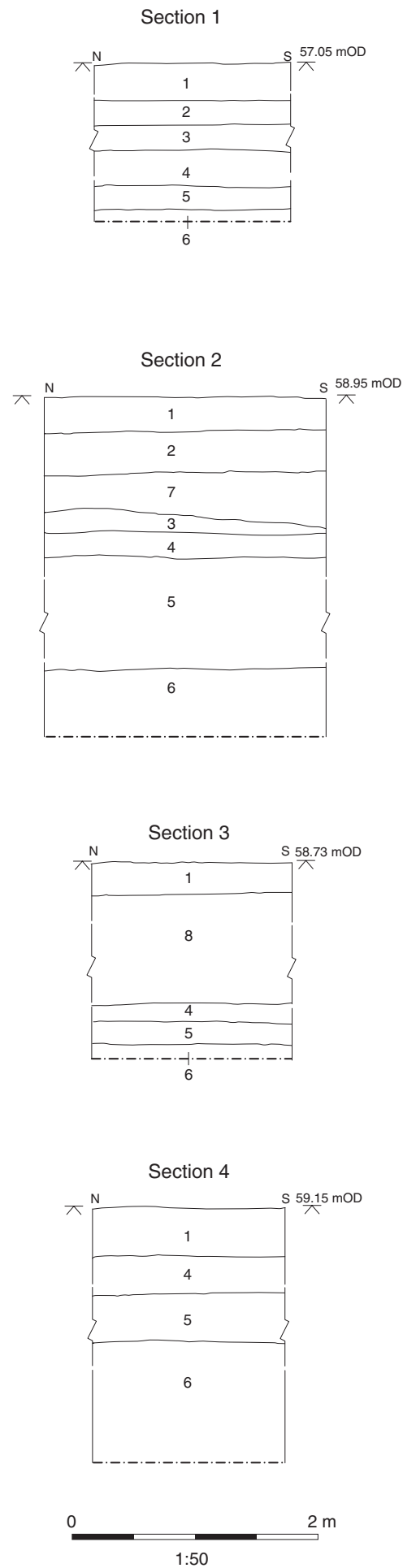


Figure 3: Sections



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